

2018 Child Rich Communities Evaluation



Photo image: Waitangirua Community

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Introduction

In early 2015, Inspiring Communities, Plunket, UNICEF and Every Child Counts began the Child Rich Communities initiative¹ or CRC. CRC aims to grow a 'child rich, community-led' movement to improve child and whānau wellbeing, by:

- learning about local champions and community-led activity making a positive difference to children and whānau across Aotearoa
- profiling, connecting and supporting these champions and their activity
- nurturing and advocating for community-led action to improve child and whānau wellbeing.

In 2015, CRC produced the Bright Spots² report, which showcased 21 examples of local community initiatives that are making a positive difference to children and families. Appendix One shares the top 10 learnings from this report and the principles behind the CRC approach that were developed as a result³. The Bright Spots provided a means to profile CRC and surface key principles behind CRC.

In 2016, the Bright Spots were brought together at a national hui to connect, share and strategise. Ideas from this hui were used to create a CRC Action Plan. S.K.I.P agreed to fund this CRC Action Plan in 2018, which took the form of three webinars, three regional workshops and four communities of practice. Inspiring Communities facilitated the delivery of the 2018 Action Plan, with Barnardos, Plunket and UNICEF part of a wider project team. The Action Plan aims to grow CRC awareness, engagement and capability.

This report evaluates the 2018 CRC activity. It begins with a report summary, before presenting the CRC context, the 2018 CRC Action Plan, the evaluation purpose, methods and findings, and implications.

S . K . I . P

Thank you to S.K.I.P for funding CRC activities during 2018

¹ See <http://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/child-rich-communities/> for background on the initiative.

² See <http://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Child-Rich-Communities-full-report.pdf>.

³ This 2017 webinar <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMivN2ikKJI> shares some of the lessons from the Bright Spots report.

Summary

Child Rich Communities is community-led development in the child and family space. It is about supporting ground up leadership and self-organising to improve tamariki and whānau wellbeing, through local community resources, skills, wisdom, strengths and relationships. It is about capability building, growing a constellation of people and practices and a system of influence that can influence systems. It is about doing and learning and adapting over time. It is a modern and Aotearoa expression of the old adage that “It takes a village to raise a child”.

The 2018 CRC activities were designed to increase awareness and engagement with CRC, build CRC capability and practice and help grow a CRC movement to benefit children and whānau.

The child rich, community-led framing of CRC attracted diverse participation across the activities. It is strengths based and places power and agency in community hands.

160+ unique participants were actively engaged in these CRC activities in 2018⁴:

3 one hour webinars attracted 100 attendees; 84% stayed for 45 minutes or longer.

3 half day workshops attracted 64 people: Whangarei (39), Ohakune (7), Whanganui (18).

4 communities of practice each held 4 two hour sessions, in Wellington, Christchurch and two online. Participants per session ranged from 3 to 9; with around 26 total unique participants.

Each community context is unique and tailored preparation and follow-up to each activity by communities and Inspiring Communities is important. Having external Inspiring Communities support working with local people to organize and run these activities built energy, attracted different kinds of participants and was highly valued.

The CRC project team has learned that having a mix of CRC activities to refer people to is invaluable and that the flow of activity is important. Ideally webinars would happen first and generate local workshops and COPs. That was the intent in 2018 but due to required timing of webinars didn't eventuate – the workshops and COPs began before the webinars were held.

The CRC webinars were promoted widely and generated interest. Attendees reported finding their content useful and applicable, feeling inspired, learning new things, feeling motivated and connected to a community of practitioners. People were especially interested in hearing about “tricky stuff” and learning edges and in asking questions. Balancing structured content with informal discussion was the main challenge. In follow-up calls with three participants, all recalled key messages and described how they had actively applied learning from the webinar.

⁴ Note that some people took part in more than one activity.

The CRC workshops provided empowering platforms for community conversation, learning, sharing and relationship building. Seeds were sown for ongoing community collaboration and action.

The Communities of Practice (COPs) provided useful vehicles for peer support, reflection, practice development and learning. The dynamic nature of the groups required skilled facilitation and flexibility to go with group energy. Some breakthrough insights and tangible impacts from the COPs were reported.

In essence, the webinars were a national vehicle for profiling CRC and sharing useful knowledge; the workshops created a space to empower the community and COPs support individual practice, learning and networking. Much was learned about the three activities in 2018, as summarised below.

	Webinars	Workshops	Communities of Practice
ACHIEVED	Informed, inspired, connected, motivated, generated interest and energy, grew a sense of community	Informed, inspired, connected, motivated, 'joined dots', sowed seeds for collaboration and ongoing action	Peer support, built capability, informed, connected, energised, inspired, some tangible impacts, ongoing action emerging
STRENGTHS	Accessible, useful content, good for inspiring, connecting and motivating, national level tool, can be used ongoing	Platform for local community connection and conversation, sowed seeds, joined dots	Connected people, shared wisdom and experience, built capability, some breakthrough insights, vehicle for peer support
CHALLENGES	One-off, sustaining momentum and energy, messages may not be retained, potential for technical issues	One-off, sustaining momentum and energy requires local energy and commitment, need to read community readiness and needs prior to maximize value	Dynamic nature of groups and participation, sustaining momentum and energy, finding right people, right time, right place (physical or online) for COPs, success rests heavily on facilitators
IMPLICATION/S	The webinars were effective in sharing CRC messages, growing practical knowledge and a CRC community	The workshops provided useful platforms for local community connection, discussion and ongoing action	The COPs provided effective peer support, reflection, practice development and peer learning mechanisms for most participants

Community knowledge and expertise in webinars, workshops and COPS and skilled external support by Inspiring Communities have been the keys to success.

The key challenge across all activities is how to sustain sparks from the energy created. While the 'why' and 'what' of working in child rich ways are often clear, people can struggle with 'how' and this was a key contribution of these activities; showing people how to do this work effectively in their contexts via the CRC principles and through sharing grass roots wisdom and experiences. More focus on 'how' to build individual and collective CRC action is needed.

The CRC workstreams in 2018 fulfilled their aims of growing awareness and engagement with the CRC principles, connecting people and building capability around CRC ways of thinking and working. They also affirm the seven CRC principles (see Appendix One), and especially those of connection, relationship building, collaboration, engagement and empowerment. The 2018 CRC workstreams have grown the CRC ecosystem by socialising the CRC principles and building local and national networks of people working in CRC ways.

Working in communities with children and families is rewarding, yet can be intensely challenging and at times isolating for CRC practitioners. This evaluation has identified that people working in the CRC space are hungry for connection, peer support, CRC stories, discussion around successes and challenges, and for safe spaces to share their issues, be inspired, be assisted and support others. More sharing of stories is needed to make the CRC principles concrete.

“CRC is valuable and we want to do more of it (IC team member)”.

CRC participants and the project team want this work to continue. Current project partners also wish to continue their involvement and strengthen their strategic contribution, with Inspiring Communities continuing to project manage and implement CRC. The desire is to carry on all three activities to build on 2018 momentum, alongside:

- Expanding and experimenting with online and digital platforms to spread CRC knowledge and practice, connect and converse, including webinars, Zoom sessions and web based information.
- Having a stronger focus on storytelling to bring the CRC principles to life, share CRC messages, community experiences, successes and challenges.
- Continuing centrally held project management, organizing, facilitation and mentoring support, while partnering closely with local people and organisations and always being directed by community interests and energy.
- Undertaking more strategic work to develop the CRC field, understand the systems at work and influence national conversations around community-led action to improve child and whānau wellbeing.
- Exploring how Te Ao Māori and other indigenous models can inform CRC thinking and practice.
- Consciously targeting and infusing CRC principles and ways of working across child and whānau focused organisations such as Plunket and Barnardos.
- Continuing to evaluate and take a learning frame to CRC activity, to help direct efforts for maximum effect.

Going deeper with one or two CRC activities in the short term, such as webinars and COPs, or more light touch with more activities, is a strategic issue to consider.

Appendix Two gives detailed suggestions on how to enhance future iterations of webinars, workshops and COPs, based on the 2018 experience.

Child Rich Communities

The old adage 'It takes a village to raise a child', is a reminder that everyone in a community has a role in shaping the lives of children, and that the role of the community is important. Children's lives are shaped most directly day to day by their family and community contexts, and if families and communities are connected and empowered to help themselves and others, outcomes for children and families will improve.

CRC is a way of working in communities that is driven by a set of principles (see Appendix One). These principles enable people in local places to take positive action for themselves, their children, their family and the wider community. The CRC theory of change involves understanding, promoting and fostering the factors that enable local communities to mobilise and sustain action over time to improve child wellbeing.

Broad engagement is fundamental for CRC, given its intent to grow a 'child rich, community-led' movement. This means growing and supporting people across the country who are actively working in community-led ways to support child and family wellbeing locally. As these local champions grow in number and connect, so too will practice knowledge, learning and awareness about CRC – inspiring new thinking about how local communities can achieve positive outcomes for children.

Broad engagement is also important as the CRC concept is driven by communities. CRC came from the knowledge and experience of community-led projects across the country, and continues to evolve and grow as different communities put it into action locally.

The CRC project is held by a coalition of agencies, including Inspiring Communities (IC), Barnardos, UNICEF and Plunket, with IC administering and facilitating the project.



CRC 2018 Action Plan

The 2018 CRC Action Plan focused on awareness raising, and building engagement and capability to grow CRC ways of thinking and working. It also sought to build foundations for the movement, for example developing 'bones' around the CRC concept through the principles, connecting with organisations and regular communications with supporters.

Work is also ongoing to explore how CRC learnings and practice can link with government policy, implementation and investment. Current government reforms indicate a strong desire to support community-led action and harness local knowledge, but there are questions around to how to do this. The CRC initiative overall, including the 2018 CRC workstreams, provide opportunities to demonstrate what this could look like.

In early 2018, time was spent connecting with the community-led projects featured in the Bright Spots report, to talk about the plan for 2018, their desired involvement and how the CRC project connected with their hopes and aspirations for the year. These conversations began the engagement process for each of the three workstreams.

S.K.I.P funding support enabled the following CRC workstreams that took place between April 2018 and February 2019:

- Three one hour webinars during September 2018
- Three half day regional workshops, held in Bream Bay (Whangarei), Ohakune and Whanganui
- Four 'communities of practice' (COPs) aimed at peer-led support for those active in the community-led development and child wellbeing space: one in Wellington; one in Christchurch and two held online. Each COP held four, two hour sessions.

Project facilitation in 2018

The Inspiring Communities project lead oversaw each workstream and ensured that all the workstreams were connected, aligned with the CRC principles and were linked to the national picture. The role also involved connecting with different communities, reaching out to different projects and organisations to engage participants and raise the project's profile. As the 2018 activity progressed an increase in engagement was reported by the project leader, as interested people across sectors got in touch to learn more.

A learning frame

A key part of the 2018 Action Plan was to put an evaluation and learning frame around the three workstreams and overall project, to understand its effects and share what was learned. An external evaluator was sourced and an evaluation approach was workshopped with the Inspiring Communities team in April and May 2018. Three reflection sessions were also held with the Inspiring Communities team as the work progressed.

The three workstreams

Webinars

In the three webinars, community practitioners shared their experiences relating to CRC principles, followed by questions and discussion on what is making a difference for children and families. Inspiring Communities facilitated each webinar and began by sharing the seven CRC principles.

The one hour webinars were held on 4 September, 13 and 27 September 2018 as follows.

Connect and Empower! The first webinar explored the principles of engagement, empowerment and connection. Julia Milne (Common Unity) and Steve McLuckie (Shore to Thrive) presented. Watch it [here](#).



The big picture. The second webinar explored the principles of thinking and working holistically and being responsive. Ginny Larsen (Mairehau Neighbourhood Trust) and Jane Denley and Adam Rivett (Waimate Parenting Hub) presented. Watch it [here](#).



It's all about relationships. The third webinar explored the principles of being relationship focused and the importance of collaboration. Lisa McKenzie (Hokonui Highway Project) and Erena Mikaere Most (Ruapehu Whānau Transformation Plan) presented. Watch it [here](#).



Invitations to register for the webinars were sent widely through Inspiring Communities and project partner networks, the Bright Spots, S.K.I.P, the Child Wellbeing Network, Community Research and Event Brite.

Workshops

In early 2018 many of the Bright Spot community-led projects indicated that they would like to host a local CRC workshop and criteria to decide where to hold workshops were developed, including geographical spread, suitability and diversity. The workshops were held in Bream Bay (Whangarei) on 30 August, Ohakune (Ruapehu) on 19 September and in Whanganui on 26 September.

The Bright Spot local hosts rallied their community, invited people, promoted the workshop, organised the venue and catering, and worked with Inspiring Communities to develop workshop content. An Inspiring Communities team member facilitated each workshop, which began with a presentation on CRC and its principles. Simon Sinek's Golden Circle⁵ was utilised, which is designed to support groups to identify their purpose (their 'why') and place this at the centre, followed by 'how' and by 'what' means they will achieve their purpose. After each workshop, a small amount of funding was offered to each community to support ongoing community-led action, along with Inspiring Communities mentoring support.

The local context for each community was important in determining the workshop approach. Here is a summary of each local context.

Bream Bay (south of Whangarei)

Bream Bay includes small communities from the coastal areas of Takahiwai, One Tree Point and Marsden Point, Ruakaka and Waipu to the inland community of Mangapai. The lead for this workshop was taken by Bream Bay: The Learning Community, which is a group of community, church, school, ECE and Lions Club members who came together four years ago to support children across the wider community.

This network was reportedly very 'warmed up' for the workshop and the host was particularly engaged as the lead for this network.

Ruapehu

Te Pae Tata Community Hub in Ohakune was the workshop venue, and the invitation was extended to the Raetihi and Waiouru communities. The Hub is currently undertaking a *Ruapehu Whānau Transformation Plan*, which was created specifically to address the "stark reality facing all three of our communities"; see <http://ruapehuwhanautransformation.com/>. This Transformation Plan was one of the presentations in the third CRC webinar.

The Hub is seen as central to the development of the region. However, the influx of funding and support for the Transformation Plan had created some local tensions. The workshop reportedly helped to strengthen connections and activities. The group decided to work together on several projects and a koha from the CRC project was given to support this.

⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5Tw0PGcyN0> for a six minute Ted Talk by Simon Sinek on the Golden Circle.

Whanganui

The Central Baptist Kindergarten was the host organisation and the participant list reflected their interests and engagement with CRC. The larger group of Whanganui participants was joined by a Wellington central participant who is funded by Parliamentary Services as a community developer, and two early childhood workers from Fielding.

Communities of Practice

The Communities of Practice (COP) brought together small groups of people involved in child and family focused community-led development, through a series of facilitated sessions. The sessions aim to foster peer support, improve practice and share learning and challenges, and build relationships and collaboration.

In early 2018 many of the Bright Spot groups expressed interest in taking part in a COP, though by the time the COPs were getting off the ground some groups had moved on and there was some hesitancy when invitations to facilitate COPs were extended.

Through the Bright Spot, Inspiring Communities, Plunket and Barnardos networks however facilitators and some participants for each COP were found. The facilitators were brought together for a training day, which covered the purpose of the COPs and the practicalities of running sessions. A COP Facilitator's Toolkit was developed specifically for this project and provided to all participants. After the training day the facilitators planned their sessions and invited participants, through their own and local networks, supplemented by those found through the CRC project networks. IC team members had regular contact with the facilitators to check progress and assist as needed.

Four COPS operated between July 2018 and February 2019, with each COP holding four two hour sessions. One COP was held in Wellington, one in Christchurch and two were held online via Zoom.

An Inspiring Communities team member also ran two group debrief sessions with the facilitators during the COP process, as well as one on one sessions with individual facilitators to share learnings, address any issues and challenges and offer assistance.

Individual and group goals and intentions were clarified in the first session. Sessions tended to be lightly structured with a check-in round, then identifying what people want to focus on – for example sharing stories, discussing challenges, asking questions, sharing successes, wisdom, resources and offering ideas, and reflecting on elements of CLD practice. The culture of each group was unique, with fluid membership, group purpose, interests and preferred style of learning.

Evaluation approach

Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to:

- Identify values and principles that support CRC and effective community-led action with children and families.
- Learn more about what is and isn't effective in connecting, growing understanding and building capability in this space.
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the activity undertaken in 2018.
- Consider how the 2018 action plan has grown the CRC ecosystem.
- Identify implications for further developing this ecosystem to achieve better outcomes with children and families.

CRC Workstream	Evaluation methods and data sources
WEBINARS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration, attendance and engagement data (who tuned in and for how long) • Short post webinar survey • Reflections from webinar presenters and facilitators • Follow up phone call with around 10% of participants
WORKSHOPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on participation • Participant and facilitator reflections • Follow up phone call with around 10% of participants
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on participation • Reflection processes within sessions and at the end • Debriefs with facilitators throughout and at the end • Facilitators followed up by phone with several participants to see what has been generated
OVERALL LEARNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three facilitated discussions with the Inspiring Communities project team: midway through the 2018 activity, at the end of 2018 and to workshop a draft of this report • Interviews were also held with project partners to gain their views

Evaluation findings are presented next, for each 2018 CRC workstream and overall.

Evaluation findings

CRC webinars

Participation

145 people registered and 100 attended (69% of registrants). Post webinar online viewing is ongoing⁶

Overall, 84% of attendees stayed for 45 minutes or longer.

	Webinar One	Webinar Two	Webinar Three
0-30 mins	3 (8%)	4 (12%)	4 (11%)
30-45 mins	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	2 (6%)
45+	33 (89%)	27 (79%)	30 (83%)
Total attendees	37 (100%)	34 (100%)	36 (100%)

Based on names provided at registration, over 75 percent of people registering and attending the webinars were women. More than half were from community organisations, along with a range of people from local and central government (including district health board staff), philanthropy, private individuals and people from tertiary institutions and commercial organisations.

While appealing most strongly to women from community organisations, registration and attendance data indicates that the webinars were of interest to people from a diverse range of backgrounds and locations nationwide.

Participation rating of the webinars

Thirty six people completed a post webinar survey (36% of attendees), with feedback below.

Rating	Webinar One	Webinar Two	Webinar Three	Total
Extremely useful	0	1	1	2
Very useful	8	7	7	22
Somewhat useful	3	5	3	11
Slightly useful	0	1	0	1
Not useful	0	0	0	0
Total	11	14	11	36

⁶ All webinars are available on the Inspiring Communities website, see <http://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/child-rich-communities/>. By the end of January 2019 a further 31 people had viewed the webinars: nine had viewed the first webinar; seven people the second and fifteen people the third.

In each case the majority of respondents found the webinar to be very useful or somewhat useful; and no-one found them not to be useful.

What is the main thing you got out of the webinar? Tick any of the following that apply to you.

Rating	Webinar One	Webinar Two	Webinar Three	Total
I felt inspired	8	10	6	24
The content was useful	8	5	8	21
I learned something new	6	6	7	19
I felt connected to a community of practitioners	6	5	6	17
I felt motivated	3	3	6	12
I will apply learning from the webinar	3	4	5	12
The content was high quality	1	3	5	9
It affirmed my practice	1	5	2	8

The main things these respondents gained from the webinars were feeling inspired, useful content, learning something new and feeling connected to a community of practitioners. A third of these respondents also stated they would apply learning from the webinar and that they felt motivated by the webinar.

Respondents noted the convenience and accessibility of the webinars and valued the experiences and learning from other communities:

“I love that you can meet the people doing these great initiatives and get insight to their journey, without travel or lots of time away from work.”

“Lovely to get a glimpse into other communities and how they are doing child rich māhī.”

“I really liked the generosity of spirit in sharing ideas and lessons learned along the way, [including] the bumps in collaborative relationships.”

“Excellent content and awesome to see what’s happening around the country. So motivating!”

One person wondered:

“I’d like to know more about how CLD [community-led development] can help people overcome the immense stress in their lives that poverty brings. How do we know it is really reaching those who could benefit from it the most?”

In terms of technical issues, participants found the webinars easy to access. One person commented that she would have preferred the slides to be available immediately after the webinar to reinforce the messages and share with colleagues.

For webinar presenters, preparation was important and one presenter felt that “The questions and answers and general interaction was the best bit”. Shorter presenting time and allowing longer for dialogue was suggested for future webinars.

In follow up phone calls with three webinar participants, all participants could recall key messages from the webinar/s. All had also actively applied learning, for example through reviewing processes, applying learning to a city wide child rich project, working harder to collaborate and encouraging their organisation “to think outside the box when working collaboratively and to think about helping each other out without always looking for a single ‘win’”.

The project team’s reflections were that webinar presentations were useful and valued in the main. People want to know about challenges, learning edges and what didn’t work, as well as successes. They also want more organic conversation, with key information up front. It is helpful to have two webinar presenters, with one leading the discussion and one reviewing questions and managing the conversation.

The webinars generated a lot of interest, with many queries received and calls from people to join a database for future webinars and other CRC activity. A perceived challenge is how to direct and sustain this interest and energy via independent, ongoing action. Ideally, for the IC team, future webinars would be followed up with COPs and/or expressions of interest to hold local workshops to take the issues forward in local communities. They would also be spread over a longer timeframe, to allow more time for each webinar to be promoted as widely and effectively as possible.

CRC workshops

Participation

A total of 64 people attended the workshops as follows.

Workshop location	No. of participants	Comment
Whangarei	39	This workshop was vigorously promoted and people were encouraged to bring a new person from the community in a buddy capacity. Participants were diverse, including local iwi members, people from a local sailing club, Police, a local newspaper, Ministry of Education, ratepayers association, new residents and a real estate agent. Ages ranged from children to 65+.
Ruapehu	7	The smaller number allowed for deeper conversation, which focused on making connections and opening possibilities among people from Raetihi and Ohakune.
Whanganui	33 (89%)	A kindergarten hosted this workshop and most participants came from an education background.

Participant feedback from the workshops in each location is as follows.

Bream Bay

In Bream Bay an open space evaluation approach was taken, with questions and responses as follows.

What's worked today for you about the workshop?	Ways to improve our child rich connections?	One word to describe your experience of the workshop?
Connecting Being inspired Enabling Care Interesting Wondering Awareness of resources	Listen to the kids Invite the kids What does everyone do? Ask us our biggest concerns Group the actions	Whānau/family Connection Together Possible Future Safe Love Children Play Aspiration Whanaungatanga

The Inspiring Communities co-facilitator noted that participants liked the term 'Child Rich Communities' and that the child rich framing seemed to hit a nerve: "People wanted action, to do stuff". She perceived that people were passionate about why they were there, and could generally identify what they could do to develop CRC, but were less clear on the 'how'. The workshop helped to show people 'how' to bring the principles of working in child rich ways to life: "So many people want to jump into let's do X – we need to take the time to focus on the how".

Ideas and actions from this workshop included:

- A real estate agent pledging to donate \$500 to a local Trust each time he sells a house and to talk with his real estate community about taking similar action.
- Another person decided to create random acts of kindness cards about paying it forward: "I live in a kind community".
- Participants were keen to hold an expo to showcase what is already happening in terms of CRC.

The open space evaluation identified that the group wanted to meet again. In a post workshop follow up call several months later, the local co-facilitator felt that the concept of a workshop was good but that more time was needed to discuss local issues. Having a workshop outline was appreciated. Since the workshop by the end of 2018 there had been three further meetings with participants and the group was working well. This indicates a high level of community readiness for this kind of activity in this community and the importance of having someone locally who can organize ongoing action post workshop. Overall, this facilitator commented that:

"The workshop was successful in providing momentum and an opportunity to come together. Before there was a lot of disconnection but now there's connection – and this provides the foundation for moving forward."

The local organizer for this workshop reported that it provided the catalyst for far greater collaboration with key groups in the community, and that groups in the community are far more connected since the workshop. This group has built CRC principles and other workshop information into their ongoing work.

In Ruapehu and Whanganui, workshop participants were asked to complete a reflection sheet at the end of the workshop. Their responses and feedback from a follow up phone call at least a month after each workshop are summarized below.

Ruapehu

Three people rated the workshop as being extremely useful and three as very useful.

When asked one thing people learned today, responses here were to plan and organize, the practice principles and ways to engage, to action my plans and walk the talk, that connection is necessary for collaboration, that I want to be involved, and more about the local community.

When asked about one thing people felt today, in Ruapehu people felt enlightened, inspired (x3), pleased, welcome (x2), warm, involved, heard and valued.

In terms of what people wanted to know more about, comments were more information on the 'how' of CRC and different ways to be involved.

In a follow-up phone call with the Ruapehu workshop co-facilitator, being approached by Inspiring Communities offering support and having the external Inspiring Communities facilitation "allows people to share more of themselves than if it was local, and so new ideas come forth, and they are also really listened to and respected in ways they might not be with locals who come with assumptions". Having a small group was also perceived to enable a greater depth of discussion and contribute to its overall success: "Better discussion than I've been to at any other community event. Great depth generally".

Importantly, the workshop has also led to ongoing action, including in Raetihi:

"This workshop has totally inspired our Raetihi folk. From the workshop we now have a Raetihi Forum established, and we are also collaborating with the District Council on their Long Term Plan. Our aim is to unlock the \$1M they have allocated to community. We have a bunch of rangitahi on board, and we are all GO. I haven't ever seen such an activation before"

Whanganui

Seven people rated the workshop as being extremely useful, five as being very useful and three as being somewhat useful.

When asked one thing people learned today, responses were that this community really wants to make a difference for families, a set of principles to guide the building of CRC, that 'WE' have a great opportunity to embrace this [CRC] and strengthen our community, the importance of a child-centred focus, about who else in the community has this child lens, about strength in our communities, the why, how and what (Simon Sinek Golden Circle), more about Inspiring Communities, and that we are a diverse group but all have the same CRC passion.

When asked about one thing people felt today, in Whanganui people felt inspired (x3), encouraged (x3), reassured, affirmed, that 'we are ready to work towards making things happen', 'great to see others working with children at the heart', 'we need to increase our sense of community around our schools', 'validated about my/our hopes and dreams for our tamariki', 'that it is doable!', that there is contagious energy and great ideas contained in our city that are exciting prospects for our children, that everyone is here for the same reason, motivated to build and strengthen CRC Whanganui, a great deal of knowledge in the group, comfortable, enjoyed discussion, a well presented workshop.

"The community seemed to be all on the same page. What a fantastic workshop - there should be more around the country. A wonderful thing to bring in to inspire CRC".

In terms of what people wanted to know more about, workshops to lead and inspire communities into working in this way were desired, seminars bringing agencies together for one shared vision, what other communities are doing and how this looks elsewhere, CRC in indigenous communities, events, ideas and resources, creating community connections, a plan to conduct a workshop in Wellington and "Care and protection of our tamariki. How do we implement this with everyone's integrity intact? A workshop on how to have these conversations would be great".

In Whanganui lively discussion about the seven principles and their interrelationships was reported. Many related stories were shared and support for each other demonstrated in terms of the challenges and 'community fatigue' people experience. One participant brought up a community challenge accepting people returned from prison and fear from neighbours about how to respond. An extended conversation and goodwill reportedly developed as the group shared how they wanted to work more closely, network, build relationships and their sense of safety with one another.

From this workshop the group decided to focus on better networking across sectors and reviving previously successful events that had since ceased (such as Children's Day).

"People came from parts of the community we wouldn't normally see - the child rich framing draws that out. Also the breadth of what is going on was made clearer, connections were made; it puts a different lens on a call to action".

In a follow-up phone call with the Whanganui workshop co-facilitator, a further CRC workshop and three collaborative projects led by three agencies had been generated, along with greater connection among various projects underway:

"We are contributing more intentionally with each other now. We all seem to heading in a common direction, so it's complimentary in ways it might not have been before the workshop".

Having the workshop in Whanganui rather than participants having to travel to a larger centre was appreciated, as was having people from outside the area attending. The IC facilitation and involvement was also much appreciated and was considered to have attracted a more diverse pool of participants: "The workshop has given us a bigger context and a wider lens; a sense of the bigger community of which we are all a part".

CRC Communities of Practice

Participation

Participant numbers varied at each session across the COPs from between 3 and 9 people, with an average of 4-5 people per session. Total unique participants were around 26. While a small core of people tended to make it to each session, there was some fall-off for a range of reasons and some new members joined along the way.

COP participants were aged 30 years and over and were predominantly female and pākehā, with around 25% Māori participation and people from a range of ethnicities participating. Overall, aside from younger people, there was good diversity in participation among the COPs, especially in terms of the CRC related roles people played. These included social service staff, community development workers, passionate residents, Māori development workers, education, health and child services workers.

Participant feedback

COP participants provided this feedback on the following questions at the end of their four sessions.

What has been valuable to you and your communities about the COP?

“The time spent together celebrating the good things alongside the hard things, with great facilitation to think wider, has left a lasting impression about how we support each other on our journeys” (Whanganui based online participant).

Three main benefits from the COPs were noted by participants.

Connection: connecting with other practitioners and local initiatives; meeting like-minded people from different communities; and exposure to other organisations and their priorities. Some participants were inspired to email and visit each other outside of the COPs.

A safe space to share, reflect and learn: a safe space to share experiences, successes and challenges, discuss and reflect; tapping into what’s going on and getting other perspectives; telling and hearing stories; and “Understanding that this work takes time and that I was imposing my expectations about outcomes onto others”.

Peer support and mentoring: discussing problems and issues and getting perspectives from others that I can apply; “This type of work can be isolating, so it’s very helpful to be part of a group and able to access support”.

Several people mentioned specific issues or challenges that they had been helped with through the COPs.

What is the most significant thing you have gained from this COP?

“The understanding that if we want to achieve better communities for children, then children have to be our first priority in our jobs. I realised that I can do better”.

Themes here were:

- Connections and the importance of connecting with others doing similar work
- Conversations, sharing ideas and different ways of thinking
- Feeling supported, not being isolated
- Realising change can only happen when people move together, and not to overthink things
- Improving my practice

- **Affirming the need to put children first**
- **Role modelling of great facilitation**
- **Being affirmed in my practice.**

“The importance of connecting with people outside your normal circle, knowing I am not alone and growing best practice” Online participant.

One online participant noted that the kōrero around storytelling in her online COP helped her organisation to tell their story better, which secured them significant funding and internships. This is considered a major success from the COP process, as this participant felt that this major new funding was a direct result of the COP process.

How would you rate the overall value of the COP to you?

1 = no value 5 = high value

Of the 12 people who responded to this question, the average response was 3.5. Three people gave a rating of 5 (extremely valuable), three of 2 (a bit of value), with the rest in between.

How likely are you to recommend this COP to others?

1 = won't 5 = will highly recommend

Of the 11 people who responded to this question, the average response was 3.5. Only one person gave a 2 (might recommend), three stated 5 (very highly recommend), four rated 4 and two rated 3.

Additional comments

“I thought this COP would add to my workload but instead it has been re-energising and refreshing”.

“It creates a feeling of belonging when you can discuss matters close to the heart with like-minded people that are extremely well informed”.

Positive feedback here was:

- **The diversity and skills in the group was appreciated**
- **Several people praised the facilitation and its role in achieving great outcomes**
- **The idea to collect CLD examples and map activity in an area was supported**
- **Openness and contributions from those taking part made me step out and try my ‘maybe’ projects; I made some great connections.**

“It was great to have an opportunity to link and learn from others working in challenging communities. It was good to be able to share what I have learned with others as well”.

In terms of challenges or difficulties, a few people had difficulties with the online format, either through inexperience with this format or technology issues, or both.

One person noted that they would have liked a bit more in-depth background information before the COP started. There were also some challenges in scheduling sessions to suit everyone and when there was a time lag between sessions there could be some lost momentum. One person in Christchurch felt that some meetings lost focus and didn't achieve much. One online participant felt the COP was not a good fit for them and didn't add value to their work.

In terms of what next for these COPs, one of the online groups wished to continue to meet bimonthly, with Inspiring Communities facilitating as the preference as the group valued the content knowledge brought by the Inspiring Communities facilitator. If this was not possible they would consider self-facilitating with a group of 5-6 members. The other online group is also hoping to continue and self-organise.

The Wellington and Christchurch groups are unlikely to self-organise to keep meeting, especially given other connection and capacity building opportunities available in their communities.

The Christchurch COP noted a need for training on how to engage and activate a project. It was noted that training mainly tends to happen when people from overseas come and run a one-off workshop or event. COPs and workshops were seen as vehicles for providing this hands-on child rich and community-led development training. There was also interest in how Te Ao Māori and other indigenous models can inform CRC practice.

Facilitators' reflections

The core benefits of the COPs were considered by facilitators to be peer support, connecting meaningfully with people working in child rich, community-led ways in communities, sharing wisdom and experience, being energised, inspired and motivated, improving practice and building leadership capability. The COPs help people to feel supported and part of a collective.

Storytelling as a way of showcasing people's work hit a nerve and the power of storytelling in this work became clear for facilitators. Learning links for online resources and courses for storytelling were shared in one COP.

For facilitators, a light structure with space for each person to contribute, followed by in-depth group feedback and conversation worked well. Zoom generally worked well and the online COP experience confirmed that trust, depth and strength can be built online. Conversations and shoulder tapping were considered the most productive ways to find participants.

Working with fluid group membership, processes and dynamics provided both challenges and opportunities. Ensuring diversity of group membership is important, so that more experienced people can mentor those less experienced and a range of experiences, issues and views can be shared. Care needed to be taken to keep checking in on the needs of changing groups. COPs require highly skilled facilitation and finding a balance between structure and moving with the energy of the group can be difficult.

“Having a mix of experience, confidence and connection with community-led development enriches the experience for participants”.

Consistent attendance was hard to achieve – busy people need to keep opting in and facilitators found it difficult scheduling sessions to suit everyone. Linked to this, keeping momentum over time during the COP process and post the COP process can be challenging, in terms of ongoing facilitation, interest and availability of participants and whether enough other learning opportunities already exist in different communities.

COP Facilitators acknowledged the value of the initial face to face workshop (one could not attend), the online conversations with other COP facilitators, and the in-depth toolbox provided, with different tools and structures for peer mentoring, and trouble-shooting tips. Even though facilitators didn't use many of the more structured tools, the toolbox still reminded them of a menu of options available, and good facilitation practice. Reflecting on how to resource and support COP facilitators, the 2018 experience highlighted that:

- It will always be hard to facilitate a COP with your peers – the strength of the online COP was that the facilitators were not peers, but independent
- Confidence as a CRC COP peer facilitator can probably best be built through first being a participant in an online COP or other peer mentoring structure
- With a thorough edit, the knowledge base in the toolkit is a valuable resource for IC to share – on the website and directly with COP participants, to keep building COP facilitation capability and confidence.

Project partner reflections

Feedback from the CRC Steering Group members representing Plunket, Barnardos and UNICEF on the 2018 CRC activity is summarised below.

Plunket

For Plunket, CRC aligns strongly with its strategy, can improve the practice of Plunket staff and volunteers and shows Plunket where there is strong interest and activity in child and whānau wellbeing across the country. The 2018 CRC activity was perceived to have created wider conversations and networks with a more diverse range of people. The high calibre of the people leading the work across the webinars, workshops, COPs and the IC facilitation was seen as the key to its success.

While there was diverse engagement from a range of the Plunket team and several people reported tangible benefits from their engagement, Plunket could have been more strongly engaged across the workstreams, and especially the COPs. A major perceived strategic opportunity for CRC is infusing the CRC principles and ways of working across the significant Plunket workforce, as well as those of other child and whānau focused organisations. Gathering stories from Plunket team members who did engage and using these as a platform to engage more Plunket participants in CRC is planned.

“A Plunket nurse engaged in a COP from an isolated location, where people fly in from out of town and leave again. That made her think about how she can get more engaged in her community, get in amongst it rather than sit in a clinic. CRC gave her the platform she needed to unpack that. That is the type of thing we want to scale up”.

The value of CRC for Plunket lies in improving both Plunket practice and outcomes for children and families: “If we behave in line with the CRC principles it becomes bigger than our organisation and opens opportunity for collaboration. You start to get sustained value for families, critical mass. Anyone can drive or participate in CRC”. At a community level, significant social benefits from CRC’s focus on building community level supports for families was perceived, especially for more isolated and marginalised communities. Plunket staff and volunteers can also promote CRC and its principles in families and communities.

In terms of what next for CRC, as well as broader Plunket engagement with CRC, there was a desire to go deeper with a few activities, and specifically COPs, rather than light touch with many. Continuing and potentially scaling COPs, alongside evaluation of their ripple effects, was sought. IC continuing to administer CRC was supported, while drawing more on the skills and resources of partner organisations, including Plunket.

Barnardos

The strategic vision of Barnardos is “An Aotearoa New Zealand where every child shines bright”. Barnardos provides direct social services to children, young people and their families and whānau, and early learning services in home and centre-based settings. Barnardos also advocates for systemic change that improves the wellbeing of children. Through working with children, families and whānau for over 60 years, Barnardos is deeply connected into communities and takes a community-led development approach in its work. As such, CRC resonates strongly with Barnardos.

Over the past year Barnardos has added value to CRC by helping to strategise around planning and implementation, being part of the Steering Group, and offering a service provider perspective.

Barnardos is committed to supporting CRC given its ability to make a positive difference for children, families, whānau and communities. Strategic opportunities Barnardos sees for CRC in 2019 and 2020 include:

- Significantly increasing Barnardos staff engagement with CRC. This can include identifying a champion and conduit for this in both its Child and Family Services and Early Learning Services, and promoting CRC via Barnardos' Intranet.
- Increasing Barnardos involvement in COPs is particularly attractive, as COPs provide great learning opportunities for staff and a chance for Barnardos staff to connect with others working in a CRC way around the country.
- Barnardos is also keen to help to make connections between the communities Barnardos works with and CRC. One way it intends to do so is by sharing stories from Child Rich Communities Barnardos works with, to add to the stories being gathered through CRC. Barnardos sees this as a valuable way to share on the ground experience, wisdom and good practice, which can serve as inspiration and encouragement for others.

Barnardos supports Inspiring Communities continuing to administer the CRC project. Barnardos can add value to CRC over the year ahead via strategic planning; participation in governance; proactively connecting Barnardos staff to CRC and sharing stories of child rich, community-led development.

UNICEF

UNICEF supported the webinar process in particular for CRC in 2018. The value of CRC for UNICEF is being connected to a national community network doing great things for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. CRC in 2018 was considered a positive experience and UNICEF was happy to provide assistance and value with communications and webinar support.

UNICEF would like to tap into any data or research from the CRC that can inform policy papers and discussions that UNICEF is involved in. UNICEF would like to continue to engage with CRC partners and the COP process. UNICEF can add value through sharing stories and assisting with content and communications. Some funding support may also be possible.

Implications

“The Child Rich context has excited people to sense that “we” can make a change to the ghastly statistics, “we” can make a difference and see a new way to think about this. This is creative and opens up possibilities. It certainly shifts the emphasis into a strengths based focus, and away from the despair that is genuinely felt” (Inspiring Communities Workshop Facilitator).

These evaluation findings demonstrate that the CRC workstreams in 2018 fulfilled their main aims of growing awareness and engagement with the CRC principles, connecting people and building capability around CRC ways of thinking and working. They also affirm the seven CRC principles, and especially those of connection, relationship building, collaboration, engagement and empowerment.

In all workstreams, the CRC framing attracted people from across sectors and interests: “The child focus hit a nerve that is building some neural networks”. Positive interest, energy and feedback was received across the workstreams.

The Inspiring Communities project management, organization, facilitation and mentoring were considered essential to success. Evaluating and learning from CRC activity is also seen as important. An organic approach was taken to this project, and this work benefitted greatly from an experienced Inspiring Communities team who allowed it to evolve. This kind of work relies on skilled holding and facilitation.

Each workstream had its strengths:

The webinars were effective in promoting CRC principles and ideas nationally, growing learning around CRC, connecting and inspiring people. The webinars can continue to be promoted and repackaged for different purposes and audiences.

The workshops were effective in connecting people locally, ‘joining dots’, growing awareness and engagement with CRC and sowing seeds for collaboration, individual and collective action. They also gave a common language, built motivation and energy, and provided a sense of what’s going on and where people are at in a community.

The COPs were effective in connecting people, building capability and sharing CRC experience, wisdom and learning across diverse people and communities. Online COP offer a way to link otherwise isolated practitioners and provide access to skills and experience from a wider pool of communities and perspectives. They demonstrated the power of storytelling as a means to grow understanding and raise resources for CRC māhī.

The main challenge is how to sustain ongoing independent CRC action for each workstream. Each workstream also had limitations; the information shared by webinars may not ‘stick’; a one-off workshop requires local energy to sustain momentum; and COPs can be tricky to facilitate, meet everyone’s needs and keep people engaged.

The IC team believe that having a suite of CRC activities to refer people to provided a ‘river of engagement’ that was invaluable. In future, the ideal sequencing of these activities would be webinars first, followed by workshops and COPs, potentially with expressions of interest to hold local workshops arising via webinars. Webinars could also surface COP participants. With workshops and COPs, it is important to understand the community concerned and with limited resource, to do the pre work and post follow up needed to make the activity as valuable as possible and support ongoing action. Online COPs may spawn local COP, and an edited and refined 2018 facilitator’s toolbox would be useful for future COPs.

The 2018 CRC workstreams have grown the CRC ecosystem by socialising the CRC principles and building local and national networks of people working in CRC ways. Based on these evaluation findings and their experience in 2018, the team wishes to continue with all three workstreams, and in particular to:

- Continue to experiment with online platforms to grow the CRC ecosystem, especially the use of tools such as Zoom (e.g. for COP), webinars and websites. More organic and less structured online methods are preferred.
- Utilise the power of storytelling to share CRC messages, community experiences, successes and challenges. People want stories about what is happening around the country, for inspiration and for learning. Stories bring the conceptual nature of the CRC principles to life and show how to work in CRC ways. This focus on 'how' to take effective CRC action individually and collectively needs stronger emphasis.
- Ensure centrally held project management, organizing, facilitation and mentoring support, while partnering closely with local people and organisations and being directed by community interests and energy.
- Undertake more strategic, big picture work developing the field and influencing national conversations around community-led action to improve child and whānau wellbeing.
- Continue to evaluate and take a learning frame to CRC activity.
- Explore how Te Ao Māori and other indigenous models can inform CRC practice
- Infuse CRC principles and ways of working across child and whānau focused organisations such as Plunket.

One issue to explore is whether to go deeper with one or two CRC activities (such as webinars and COPs), or more light touch with more activities.

If the 2018 CRC activities were to continue the team would make the improvements outlined in Appendix Two.

Appendix One: Bright spots lessons and CRC principles

Top ten learnings from the Bright Spots Report

1. See local people as the greatest asset and as being resource rich, rather than a 'problem to be fixed, vulnerable, high-needs, or broken'.
2. If families are well, then children are well.
3. Counter the culture of disempowerment. Encourage local people to recognise their own power and ignite their dreams and aspirations. The focus is on what is working in communities.
4. Go beyond 'social service delivery'. Walk alongside people, use 'soft doors' (e.g. informal coffee groups, local events) and ensure reciprocity.
5. No judgement. No stigma. Accessed by free-will.
6. Change takes time – be there for the long-haul.
7. Build on the positive first (before tackling the 'negatives'). Start with strengthening social connectedness and building trust.
8. Relationships and individuals are key.
9. Being a 'local' gives you a head start. Some bright spots were started or championed by a member of the same community they were trying to effect change in.
10. 'Externals' can still make a difference. Some bright spots were started by an external person or organization, but they had to work harder to build relationships and gain the community's trust and ownership.

CRC principles

The CRC principles were developed from Bright Spots research learnings and family-centred, community-led practice principles, and resources that Inspiring Communities created in collaboration with the Families Commission and Victory Village.

1. **Engagement** – work inclusively and without judgement. See local people as the greatest asset, not a 'problem to be fixed'. Proactively reach out and involve families, whānau and the wider community in discussions and decision making.
2. **Empowerment** – go beyond 'social service delivery', proactively work alongside local people in ways that encourage them to participate, lead, make decisions and take action themselves. Encourage people to recognise their own power and help ignite their dreams and aspirations.
3. **Connection** – build on the positives first and be welcoming. Use soft doors (e.g. coffee groups, local events) to strengthen social connectedness and build trust. Look to link people, and ideas, with others who can help, explore shared visions and next steps. Seek to build community in all you do.
4. **Collaboration** – work together with multiple stakeholders to maximise energy, impact and resources. Make sure local whānau and community leaders are authentically involved and supported to participate.
5. **Relationship focused** – value and nurture strong, respectful, reciprocal and long-term relationships with families, whānau and the wider community.
6. **Responsive** – be willing to change and adapt how things are done to enable the aspirations of local families, whānau and the wider community.
7. **Think and work holistically** – if families and whānau are well, children are well. If our whānau, families and children are well – so will be our communities.

Appendix Two: Future refinements to CRC workstreams

With any future workstream activities the IC team would take on board the following.

Future webinars

- Space out a webinar series and provide ample time for effective packaging and promotion of each webinar.
- Strike a balance between structured content and organic content, making sure there is plenty of time for questions and discussion.
- Have one person introducing and facilitating the webinar and another managing questions and discussion.
- Keep a register of people who express an interest in webinars and send them the links.

Future workshops

- Invest in prior groundwork in each local community to gauge the best approach, given unique local contexts and the desire to make the workshops as valuable as possible.
- Ensure some resource and support is available to facilitate ongoing action from the workshop, with local people.

Future COPs

- Around six participants is considered ideal for COPs, with the ability for new people to join. The smaller the group, generally the greater depth of conversation.
- Recruit participants via webinars, workshops or through shoulder tapping. A diversity of participants in terms of experience and roles is an important design feature.
- Skilled and confident facilitators are critical. Facilitators of online COPs need to be proficient with technology and online processes. Ideally a local facilitator would have experienced an online COP, to see the process in action.
- The right tools are needed to support facilitators. Someone available to support facilitators is important. Some structure via a simple toolbox for facilitators and participants is likely to be helpful.
- Identify shared purpose and interests with participants before the COP starts. Invest time before a COP begins in talking to people and doing the groundwork to get the right participants, clarify kaupapa and optimise value for all. Take the time needed for whanaungatanga, to get to know each other and build trust.
- Online COPs can potentially spawn local COPs where there is a need.
- Flexibility is needed between structured content and working with group energy and letting the COP evolve as it needs. Each group should be able to decide on the optimum length of each session, how to make it as easy as possible to participate and how to optimise time, participation and value for participants.
- For groups that wish to continue it is helpful to have some resource to support that.
- Local or regional COPs should be targeted to places where less activity and support for CLD is available.
- In future evaluation of COPs, ask participants about their experience and level of confidence with CRC and community-led development.